

## **Laying the Foundation for Democracy in Nuremberg** PART TWO OF TWO

Some of the techniques and theories used to denazify Germany in the aftermath of World War II (WWII) reverberate today in the effort to remove insurgents from power in Iraqi and Afghanistan.

This is the second of two parts about the denazification of Germany. This part describes reeducating the Germans in Nuremberg to convince them of the necessity of abandoning their militaristic and Nazi ways for democratic ways.

The first part, published in the October-December 2008 edition of Fires, described the initial, faltering steps taken by the Americans and Germans to identify and remove *Nazis from power while still trying to rebuild the country.* 

n 1945, the Americans embarked upon a crusade to eliminate Nazism in Germany as a part of reforming the country in the aftermath of the war. To cleanse Nuremberg, a bastion of Nazism, American military governors implemented an ambitious two-prong denazification program.

Besides removing or excluding former active Nazis from positions of authority and trying to restore the pre-1933 social order, the Americans pushed a determined reeducation program to democratize Nurembergers. Through the schools, youth groups, adult organizations and the media, they planned to convince the German people to abandon their Nazi ways and convert to a democratic lifestyle. If successful, the focus of reeducation, which lay at the heart of occupation, was designed to purify the people of their pro-Nazi attitudes and behaviors and permit a democratic, peace-loving people to rise like the fabled phoenix out of the ashes of World War II.

## By Dr. Boyd L. Dastrup

**Education.** Upon entering Nuremberg in April 1945, Nuremberg's military government detachment, under Lieutenant Colonel Delbert C. Fuller, and the understaffed Education and Religious Affairs Branch of the US Forces, European Theater (USFET), (later renamed Office of Military Government, US Zone or OMGUS), promptly began to implement American reeducation policies. As directed by Joint Chiefs of Staff Directive 1067, they closed all schools and created a position of superintendent of schools to break much of the power that the State of Bavaria had had over education for years and to imitate the American model of local jurisdiction over education.1

The Americans selected Dr. Hans Raab as the superintendent on 25 May 1945, from three candidates submitted by Nuremberg's Lord Mayor Julius Rühm, after they had determined that Raab Heinrich Hollands (left), editor, "Aachener Nachrichten," and BGEN Robert A. McClure watch the first licensed newspaper come off the press. (Photo courtesy of The Center of Military History, US Army, reprinted from The US Army in the Occupation of Germany 1944-1946)

was politically clean and amenable to American plans for occupation. Later, they chose Otto Barthel, who also was untainted by Nazism and a teacher by profession, as the assistant superintendent. Working as a team, Raab and Barthel were responsible for running the schools on a daily basis while American military governors acted in a supervisory capacity to ensure that American goals were implemented.<sup>2</sup>

Despite a vehement outcry by Raab who wrote a letter to the Americans on 19 July 1945, about the disruption caused by the denazification of teachers, Nuremberg's military governors diligently continued their purge that had started in April 1945. Before reopening the Volksschulen (elementary) and secondary schools, Fuller forced all teachers to complete the lengthy Fragebogen (questionnaire) that detailed their activities during the Third Reich to gauge their political reliability and keep Nazi teachers out of the classroom which would undercut American political interests.

*Teachers*. This process produced fruits quickly. Between April 1945, and September 1945, the Americans dismissed more than 700 elementary school teachers for Nazi activities, leaving only 196 to teach more than 20,000 elementary-aged children. This process simultaneously removed secondary teachers with Nazi affiliations and unfolded as the Americans pushed to reopen the schools, using warehouses and other facilities as emergency classrooms as necessary.3

In October 1945, Colonel Charles H. Andrews (who succeeded Fuller) addressed the impact of denazification, implicitly acknowledging Raab's concern. He reported that 105 people had applied for teaching positions in the city's elementary schools, but that only 23 had been found to be politically reliable. Out of desperation, he hired retired teachers (who had been forced out of teaching under the Nazis) and people without any formal training.4 "Hiring ... persons with little or no pedagogical training ... has made possible the opening of many schools ... but the expedient does not proffer a permanent solution to the problems of the teacher shortage," recorded the Americans.5

Printers assemble denazified textbooks. (Photo courtesy of The Center of Military History, US Army, reprinted from *The US Army in the Occupation of Germany 1944-1946*)

Along with the lack of proper school facilities, the removals and the shortage of politically acceptable teachers created classrooms with a ratio of one teacher to 80 to 100 students, obstructing effective learning.<sup>6</sup> Although the removals were disruptive, the Americans found them to be indispensable. As the Americans observed in 1947, these "corrective" or "house-cleaning" measures were destroying the Nazi influence in the schools and rebuilding education along democratic principles.<sup>7</sup>

Faced with insufficient numbers of teachers with acceptable political views and professional credentials, the Americans restructured German teacher education to create a democratically-oriented teacher corps. The Americans opened a teacher training school, near Nuremberg, for women and 24 coeducational teacher training schools throughout Bavaria in 1945 and 1946. By 1946, the newly founded programs began producing teachers, who were "properly groomed" in the virtues of democratic institutions, were ready to enter the classroom to serve as role models, were prepared to tutor the youth in the democratic style of learning with lively debate and free exchange of ideas and thought, and were geared to teach the moral superiority of democracy over Nazism.8

Although the Americans valued subject matter expertise and qualifications, they clearly treasured the person's political orientation even more. Because the teachers would be on the frontline in the battle to instill democratic ideals in the city's youth, the Americans could not compromise their objective of a democratic school system to expediency by having politically unreliable teachers. This meant developing teachers who would serve as the paragons of democratic principles and requiring all teachers to sign a certificate showing their support for American occupation objectives before being hired.<sup>9</sup>

Textbooks. Without acceptable textbooks, creating a democratic teacher corps would be in vain. As a temporary measure, American officials vetted pre-1933 and other existing textbooks, eliminating objectionable material on racism, nationalism, authoritarianism and other controversial topics. <sup>10</sup> Although they did not burn books, the Americans banned any pro-Nazi, racist or militaristic books, such as Alfred Rosenberg's Myth of the Twentieth Century, and



replaced them with Fred C. Kelly's *Daniel Boone*, Felix Frankfurter's *Mr. Justice Holmes and the Supreme Court* and other comparable books.

The replacement books suggested that the Americans consciously selected literature which favorably portrayed individualism, representative government, cooperation, freedom of speech, freedom of religion and tolerance (the basis of a democratic society) and encouraged good citizenship. Above all, the textbooks had to convey the American concept of individualism to counteract the German emphasis upon obedience to authority because this had led to blind allegiance to the Nazis. Fearing the reemergence of Nazi and German authoritarianism and the fragility of democratic habits, the Americans had no other choice but to choose school textbooks.11

Soon, the emergency situation gave way to a more permanent solution. In 1946, the Americans created the Curriculum and Textbook Center, later renamed the Educational Service Center in 1948, to help German educators write democratically oriented textbooks. Even though the center served as a watchdog through 1949, to censor unacceptable material as required, the Germans assumed greater control over the content of their textbooks after 1947, when they started introducing their own. Approved by the Americans, German-written textbooks decried authoritarianism, racism. militarism and extreme nationalism and were free from the taint of Nazism to serve as a vehicle to convert the youth to democracy. 12

Curriculum reform accompanied picking appropriate books. OMGUS emphasized, "... it is imperative that the whole school program make a significant contribution to the democratic experi-

ence...."13 Although the city's youth took the typical classes in language, health, music, literature, social science and other academic subjects, they participated in the democratic process as a means of wiping out the "fanatic and consuming creed" of Nazism. Directed by the Americans, students organized classroom committees, discussion groups, clubs and community service projects, elected officers to lead those groups and studied about representative government, religious toleration and other similar topics. For the Americans, education was more than solely a means of imparting knowledge. It also served as a vehicle to remedy the ills of society by passing on values deemed to be important to inculcate in the vouth.14

The School System. Upon entering Nuremberg, the Americans found a two-track school system that required restructuring if they were to democratize the youth. All German children attended four years of elementary school (Volksschulen). Those (approximately 10 percent) who passed a rigorous test at the end of the fourth year attended one of several different types of secondary schools: the humanistic Gymnasium, the Oberrealeschule with its more modern curriculum or the Aufbauschule for late bloomers. These schools furnished students with a demanding curriculum that emphasized classical languages, prepared them for the university, charged fees and tuition to restrict attendance to the affluent and preserved a classbased society.

The less affluent and intellectually gifted youths continued their education in elementary school for another four years until they were 14, and then attended a vocational or technical school to learn a trade. These students received little preparation for good citizenship in

a democratic society and faced insurmountable odds transferring to the secondary school regardless of subsequent test scores. From the American perspective, this educational system fostered inequality of opportunity, restricted university attendance to a select few, prevented subsequent scaling the socioeconomic ladder, was undemocratic and had to be abolished.15

Confronting this rigid class-based education system in Nuremberg, Fuller and Andrews set out to erect one patterned after the American school system as directed by their superiors. Upon leaving the elementary school, all students would enter a tuition-free secondary school where a core of subjects and electives on the virtues of democracy would be offered. According to American military governors, only a school system replicating the American system would facilitate shaping the minds of the youth along acceptable lines. No stone could be left unturned in the fight to overcome Nazi ideology which was a "noxious distillation of militarism and racial myth combined with an extreme and irrational nationalism."16

Yet, the Americans never got the Nurembergers to go beyond free books and tuition for the secondary schools. Strong opposition prevented further reform and left Nuremberg with a twotracked school system—one that led to the trade school after the elementary school and one that led to the secondary school and eventually the university—to perpetuate an elitist class system.17

Recognizing the limitations of reforming the schools, Nuremberg's military governors tackled youth groups. They outlawed Hitler youth groups and paramilitary youth organizations, banned wearing uniforms, insisted on voluntary membership in youth groups to end the compulsion of the Nazi years, prohibited former active Nazis from serving as youth leaders and nurtured American-style youth groups. 18 All youth groups had to promote the virtues of democracy and reinforce classroom lessons about democracy. Through sports and leisure time activities, the Americans hoped to instill the value of teamwork and sportsmanship in Nuremberg's youth as they were doing with their own in the US.<sup>19</sup>

By stressing democratic principles as a vital part of sporting activities and youth groups, American military governors in Nuremberg reaffirmed that democracy was more than a political system of representative government. It was an entire way of life where the freedom

of association, freedom of speech, and tolerance were key elements.20

In December 1948, Lieutenant Colonel James C. Barnett, the Director of Military Government in Nuremberg from 1946 to 1948, found reeducation in the schools and youth groups to be succeeding. The youth groups, for example, elected leaders, created committees and freely debated public issues without the fear of retaliation from radical groups. Three years after the war, Barnett saw progress instilling democratic ideals in the youth.<sup>21</sup>

For the Americans, reeducating the vouth formed the heart of denazifying Germany. Youth between the ages of six and 14 years of age had lived their entire lives under National Socialism, had been intensely indoctrinated and were the most vulnerable. To undo the damage of the Nazi years, Fuller, Andrews, Barnett and other military governors removed former active Nazis from school faculties, reformed the curriculum, instituted a new democratically oriented teacher education program, ensured that the appropriate books were available to the youth and tried to eliminate the two-track education system.

Although these initiatives created the conditions for democratically-oriented youth to grow and mature and started the process of erasing years of Nazi influence, Alonzo C. Grace, the Director of Cultural Relations for OMGUS, found them to be lacking.<sup>22</sup> In April 1949, as American military occupation came to an end, he wrote, "There is no reason to believe that, after 12 years of indoctrination in Nazi ideology, German youth has accepted the democratic ideal. Constant

care and supervision become necessary, therefore, to assure a democratic future for the country."23 Reeducating the vouth had to continue into the foreseeable future.24

**Reeducating Adults.** American military government officials also designed grand plans to reeducate the adults, but this effort was clearly secondary to reeducating the youth.<sup>25</sup> By employing trade unions, churches, Volkshochschulen (adult education schools), town hall meetings, forums and other adult organizations, they pressed to reverse the "misinformation so adroitly supplied the Nazis."26

Activism. During a period of two vears beginning in 1946, Barnett and other Americans used carefully written

lectures and well-planned discussions to impress upon the adults the importance of democratic values, the imperative of freedom of speech and the necessity of participating in public life and eschewing radical ideologies. Even Americansponsored German speakers taught about the obligation of the people to prevent the rise of another Hitler and chastised the adults about being politically complacent in the past, implying that such inaction had led to the rise of the Nazi Party. Therefore, they bore some responsibility for the Nazi years and had to do their part in reshaping the city's values.<sup>27</sup>

While director of military government in Nuremberg from late 1948 to early 1949, Charles M. Emerick reinforced this line of thought and pushed for political activism to avoid another Hitler. Emerick explained that a democracy gave people the right to say what they desired without being harassed by the government, produced a government that existed to help the people and not to oppress them, and emphasized Germany's ability to join the democratic countries of the world. Basically, Emerick and his predecessors served as ambassadors of democrat values; advertised it as the best political, economic and social system in the world; and offered the people hope for the future.<sup>28</sup>

Answering an OMGUS questionnaire in 1948, American military governors wrote that the forums, town meetings and other means of reeducating the adults were having success. After three years of occupation, "they are less susceptible to the influence of demagogues playing on nationalist and racist sentiments and realize if their government is not repre-

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> sentative it is possible to replace those officials who no longer represent the will of the majority...."29

> Media. Since the schools, town meetings, forums, trade unions, adult education schools and other venues could not reach everyone, the Americans simultaneously harnessed the city's media to serve as an arm of reeducation. Upon occupying Nuremberg, the 6870th District Information Control Command (DISCC), commanded by Colonel Bernard B. McMahon from his headquarters in Munich, closed



down the local newspaper (the Nuremberg *Nachrichten*), the radio station and the movie theaters; removed former active Nazis from responsible positions; and licensed and registered all applicants for jobs to ensure that only politically acceptable people were hired to eliminate the source of the evil and establish the conditions for good to arise.<sup>30</sup>

The 6870th DISCC launched the first phase of information control in April 1945, by publishing a newspaper to spread the American version of the news. The first postwar newspaper appeared in Nuremberg in September 1945, edited by Hans Habe—a major in the US Army and a former Austrian newspaper editor who had fled Austria for France after the Anschluss of Austria in 1938, and made his way to the US to become a citizen in 1942. Using the best ink and paper available as a means to attract readers, the biweekly newspaper extolled the virtues of the American democratic way of life and the evils of Nazism, as did other American-ran newspapers in the American zone of occupation.<sup>31</sup>

Habe's editorship proved to be short-lived because of the American policy of replacing American editors with politically reliable Germans as soon as possible in the drive to launch the second phase of information control of creating a German-ran media. After an intensive search for Habe's replacement, the Americans finally selected Dr. Josef Eduard Drexel to be the Nachrichten editor. Because Drexel had been imprisoned by the Nazis, the Americans found him to be sympathetic to their cause of spreading democratic ideals.

On 11 October 1945, he published the first edition of the paper with the initial printing press being located in Zirndorf, a small village near Nuremberg, because he could not find one in Nuremberg and later relocated the paper's operations to Nuremberg in 1946, upon finding a

suitable press there. Although he had the freedom to run the newspaper as he desired, the 6870th DISCC limited freedom of the press—a sacred right in the US. The Americans warned him about violating American military government policy and attacking democratic ways.

If Drexel printed unfavorable articles, his newspaper could be closed down. Through a concentrated effort the 6870th DISCC and Drexel, who certainly was amenable to American goals, employed the *Nachrichten* as a vanguard of democratic thought in the city and the region by being an outspoken opponent of Nazism and after 1947 communism.<sup>32</sup>

In the meantime in September 1945, the Americans reopened the city's radio station under their management after removing former active Nazis and broadcasted programs that constructively portrayed democracy and bombarded the people with the evils of Nazism. This type of programming fed the Germans a steady diet of information in 1945, and early 1946, to influence their attitudes and alter behavior.<sup>33</sup> Even after turning over operation of the station to the Germans in June 1946, and subsequently allowing it to join a network of German radio stations, the Americans still exercised pre-broadcast censorship to ensure adherence to OM-GUS directives.34

Likewise, the Americans purged the movie industry. They licensed only politically reliable managers and owners of movie theaters in Nuremberg, approved what films could be shown, and permitted KALI movie theater and the museum to reopen in December 1945. Because of the limited number of acceptable German films, city residents viewed *How Green was My Valley, Our Town, Two Years before the Mast, Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* and others.

According to military government officials, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, a movie

An author submits a manuscript for Information Control Division (ICD) clearance. (Photo courtesy of The Center of Military History, US Army, reprinted from *The US Army in the Occupation of Germany* 1944-1946)

about returning World War II veterans and their challenges attracted the largest audiences. Without exception, these movies and others depicted the vitality of democracy, individualism and other democratic values to convince the Germans to give up their past behavior. Knowing that the Germans would be hungry for entertainment to escape from the rigors of postwar life, the Americans even adapted movies to serve their interests.<sup>35</sup>

For the most part, the Americans accomplished their objectives for the media in 1945-1946. They destroyed the existing media and laid the foundations for a new one to arise. Politically acceptable people occupied positions as editors, publishers, reporters and directors of news agencies, radio stations and movie theaters. The Allied Authority Directive Number, published in October 1946, gave the Germans the right to editorialize and criticize occupation policies in the media. But the Americans still retained the power of censorship, if required, through 1949, when occupation ended. <sup>36</sup>

Making few exceptions to occupation directives, Nuremberg's military governors waged war on the city. Applying denazification directives vigorously, American military governors eagerly removed former active Nazis and replaced them with people amenable to their postwar goals. Once the right people were in place with some former active Nazis being included to use their technical skills, the Americans employed the schools, youth groups, adult organizations and media to change behavior, democratize and undo the elaborate machinery of "thought control" created by the Nazis.<sup>37</sup>

Fearful of the Nurembergers' inability to cleanse themselves voluntarily of their Nazi and militaristic ways, the Americans paradoxically relied upon authoritarian measures and upon censorship in their drive to reeducate the people. Ironically, a democratic life style began emerging by 1947, as evident by the mock elections in schools and youth groups, the growing tolerance for differing opinions, the acceptance of individualism and dignity of the individual by youths and adults, and the willingness of the new leadership in the media, schools, youth groups and adult organizations to model democracy as the preferable lifestyle.

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